



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

TODD P. GRAVES

Contact Don Ledford, Public Affairs • (816) 426-4220 • 400 East Ninth Street, Room 5510 • Kansas City, MO 64106

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHICAGO MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ID THEFT RELATED TO WESTERN UNION FRAUD

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Chicago, Ill., man pleaded guilty in federal court today to participating in a conspiracy to commit wire fraud.

Bryan C. Barnett, 28, of Chicago, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Howard F. Sachs this morning to the charges contained in a Dec. 16, 2004, federal indictment.

Barnett admitted that co-conspirators targeted Citibank credit card holders and Western Union agents in a scheme that federal prosecutors believe resulted in a loss of more than \$400,000 for more than 50 victims. Although pleading guilty today, **Barnett** has not agreed with the government's calculation of the loss amount or the number of victims.

When targeting individual card holders, Graves explained, **Barnett** and/or his co-conspirators would call Western Union posing as the credit card holder and request a money transfer. Prior to making this call, **Barnett** and/or his co-conspirators would make arrangements to forward the victim's home telephone line to a location occupied by them, so that when Western Union called back to verify the wire transfer, **Barnett** would be in a position to answer the call as if he were the victim.

When targeting businesses that served as Western Union agents, Graves explained, **Barnett** and/or his co-conspirators would call Western Union posing as an employee of a Western Union agent. **Barnett** and/or his co-conspirators would then initiate a fraudulent and fictitious wire transfer that would be picked up by a member of the conspiracy.

To facilitate the scheme, Graves added, **Barnett** sometimes posed as a fraud early warning employee of the Citibank credit card company in order to obtain information on true Citibank credit card holders. At other times, **Barnett** posed as various Citibank credit card

holders requesting a money transfer that would be charged to their Citibank credit card. At still other times, **Barnett** posed as a Western Union employee who was contacting a business regarding a particular Western Union account.

In one instance, Graves said, **Barnett** called Western Union on March 28, 2003, posing as a Lee's Summit, Mo., man. **Barnett** requested a \$4,500 wire transfer with a co-conspirator as the payee. This wire transfer was completed, and the money orders picked up in Ypsilanti, Mich. The victim's credit card was charged \$4,720 (the amount of the transfer plus Western Union's fee of \$220). Furthermore, Graves said, an examination of the victim's telephone records indicates that his home telephone had call forwarding added to the line and any calls received were forwarded to another number.

Under federal statutes, **Barnett** could be subject to a sentence of up to 25 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000 or twice the financial gain, as well as an order of restitution. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David M. Ketchmark and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Matt P. Wolesky. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow